

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00
NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 PM-05 H-01
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TRSE-00 EA-10 SSC-01 /091 W
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O P 301242Z JUN 78

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2514

INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY PRIORITY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA PRIORITY

AMCONSUL COLOMBO PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY DACCA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY

AMCONSUL MADRAS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY

CINCPAC PRIORITY

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, IN

SUBJECT: CHARAN SINGH AND RAJ NARAIN RESIGN FROM THE CABINET

REFS: A. NEW DELHI 10044, B. NEW DELHI 9764,
C. NEW DELHI 9578

SUMMARY. THE CHRONIC IN-FIGHTING WITHIN THE JANTA PARTY
REACHED A SHOWDOWN JUNE 29-30 WHEN PRIME MINISTER DESAI
SOUGHT THE RESIGNATIONS FROM THE CABINET OF HOME
MINISTER CHARAN SINGH AND HEALTH MINISTER RAJ NARAIN. AT
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LAST REPORT, THE TWO MINISTERS HAVE COMPLIED WITH THE PM'S
REQUEST. INITIAL EDITORIAL REACTION HAS BEEN GENERALLY
FAVORABLE, ALTHOUGH THE REACTION AMONG JANATA FIGURES
PREDICTABLY VARIES ACCORDING TO INDIVIDUAL LOYALTIES.
IT IS CLEAR THAT CHARAN SINGH'S BLUNT INDICTMENT ON
JUNE 28 OF THE PARTY LEADERSHIP FOR FAILING TO
PROSECUTE MRS. GANDHI WAS THE LAST STRAW FOR MORARJI

AND COMPANY. SPECULATION IS RAMPANT ON THE NEXT STEPS. AT THE MOMENT, IT SEEM UNLIKELY THAT CHARAN SINGH AND RAJ NARAIN WILL QUIT THE PARTY, SINCE SUCH A PRECIPITATE STEP WOULD FURTHER EXILE THEM INTO THE POLITICAL WILDERNESS. RUMORS ARE ALSO CIRCULATING ON POSSIBLE SUCCESSORS TO THE OUSTED HOME AND HEALTH MINISTERS. THEREMAY ALSO BE AN IMMINENT CABINET RESHUFFLE. ALTHOUGH THE DESAI GOVERNMENT APPEARS SECURE AT PRESENT, THE FATE OF JANATA GOVERNMENTS IN U.P., BIHAR AND HARYANA (WHICH HAVE BLD CHIEF MINISTERS) IS LESS CLEAR. END SUMMARY.

1. AFTER MONTHS OF INTERMINABLE BACK-BITING AND INNUENDOS, THE JANATA PARTY IN-FIGHTING HAS FINALLY REACHED A SHOWDOWN. PRIME MINISTER DESAI LATE ON THE EVENING OF JUNE 29 WROTE LETTERS TO GOI HOME MINISTER CHARAN SINGH AND HEALTH MINISTER RAJ NARAIN REQUESTING THEIR RESIGNATIONS FROM THE CABINET FOR GROSS VIOLATION OF PARTY DISCIPLINE AND OF THE PRINCIPLE OF COLLECTVE LEADERSHIP. THELETTERS, REPORTEDLY DRAFTED BY FINANCE MINISTER PATEL ANDLABOR MINISTER VARMA, WERE DELIVERED TO CHARAN SINGH AND RAJ NARAIN LATE LAST NIGHT. ACCORDING TO LATEST NEWS REPORTS TODAY (JUNE 30), CHARAN SINGH AND RAJ NARAIN SUBMITTED THEIR LETTERS OF RESIGNATION TO THE PRIME MINISTER. THEIR FOLLOWERS ARE DUE TO MEET AT CHARAN SINGH'S REST HOUSE LATER THIS
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EVENING TO CONSIDER FUTURE ACTIONS.

2. THE PM'S ACTION COMES IN TE WAKE OF THE JUNE 29 "EMERGENCY" MEETING OF THE CABINET. IT IS STILL NOT CLEAR WHETHER, AS QUICKLY SPECULATED BY ONE WIRE SERVICE, THE CABINET SPECIFICALLY REQUESTED MORARJI TO SEEK THE RESIGNATIONS OR WHETHER IT SIMPLY AUTHORIZED HIM T DEAL WITH THE TWO MINISTERS AS HE SAW FIT. IN ANY EVENT, WE UNDERSTAND RELIABLY THAT THE ISSUE OF SEEKING THE RESIGNATIONS WAS DISCUSSED BY THE CABINET AND IT IS CLEAR THAT TE PM MOVED SWIFTLY TO DEAL FIRMLY WITH CHARAN SINGH AND RAJ NARAIN.

3. INITIAL EDITORIAL REACTION WAS GENERALLY APPROVING OF MORARJI'S STERN RESPONSE. WHILE ACKNOWLEDGING THAT THE MOVE RISKS A SPLIT THE RULING PARTY, MOST EDITORS APPAUD THE LEADERSHIP'S DECISION TO TAKE A STAND AGAINST THE PRIME AGENTS OF INDISCIPLINE AN FACTIONALISM WITHIN THE JANATA. THEY WROTE THAT THE INTRIGUES OF CHARAN SINGH AND RAJ NARAIN HAD SEVERELY DAMAGED THE PARTY'S IMAGE AND HAMPERED THE GOVERNMENT'S ABILITY TO FUNCTION. WITH THE MATTER NOW FINALLY

SETTLED, THE JANATA HAS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR A FRESH START TO "GET ON WITH THE BUSINESS OF GOVERNING."

4. REACTIONS FROM JANATA LEADERS AROUND THE COUNTRY PREDICTABLY DEPEND UPON EACH INDIVIDUAL'S PERSONAL LOYALTIES. CHARAN SINGH STALWARTS HAVE CALLED IT THE "DEATH KNELL" OF THE PARTY, WHIL OTHERS INCLINED TOWARD MORARJI AND THE BULK OF THE JANATA LEADERSHIP HAVE WELCOMED IT AS A BELATED, DIFFICULT BUT NECESSARY ACTION IN THE LONGER TERM INTERESTS OF THE PARTY, GOVERNMENT AND COUNTRY.

5. IT IS STILL NOT CLEAR WHO OR WHAT MOTIVATED CHARAN SINGH TO THE FINAL STEP AND PROVOKE AN OPEN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BREAK WITH THE JANATA LEADERSHIP, ESPECIALLY WHEN IT SEEMD EARIER THIS WEEK THAT MEDIATION EFFORTS MIGHT SUCCEED KTHROUGH J.P. NARAYAN'S INTERVENTION) IN PATCHING UP THE DIFFERENCES. WHATEVER HIS MOTIVES, IT IS CLEAR THAT HIS JUNE 28 OUTBURST ON THE MRS. GANDHI ISSUE WAS THE FINAL STRAW FOR MORARJI AND COMPANY. ALTHOUGH WE HAVE NOT YET SEEN THE TEXT, THE PM'S LETTER REQUESTING CHARAN SINGH'S RESINGATION REPORTEDLY

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REFUTED POINT BY POINT THE ALLEGATIONS CONTAINED IN
THE HOME MINISTER'S STATEMENT. MORARJI'S KEY POINT WE UNDERSTANDN
WAS THAT CHARAN SINGH WAS IN NO POSITION TO CRITICZE
GOVERNMENT INACTION REGARDING MRS. GANDHI, SINCE IT WAS
HIS OWN HOME MINISTRY WHICH WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR
DEVELOPING CASES AGAINST HER. AND IN THE TWO MONTHS
SINCE THE PUBLICATION OF THE SHAH COMMISSION REPORTS,
THE HOME MINISTER HAD NEVER CONSULTED THE CBINET
ABOUT THE POSSIBLE PROSECUTION OF THE FORMER PM.
MORARJI'S LETTER TO RAJ NARAIN WAS REPORTEDLY TOUGHER
IN TONE AND SPECIFICALLY CHARGED THE HEALTH MINISTER
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WITH "VIOLATION OF THE PRINCIPAL OF COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP"
WITH REGARD TO THE SIMLA INCIDENT, WHEN HE ADDRESSED
A PUBLIC RALLY IN DEFIANCE OF ORDERS BY THE JANATA
STATE GOVERNMENT OF HIMACHEL PRADESH.

6. SPECULATION IN DELHI IS LEGION ABOUT THE NEXT MOVES.
THE GENERAL FEELING AMONG OUR SOURCES AND OUR DIPLOMATIC
COLLEAGUES IS THAT HAVING BEEN DEALT A STUNNING SETBACK
CHARAN SINGH AND RAJ NARAIN WILL NOT IMMEDIATELY
PRECIPITATE A FURTHER CRISIS BY RESIGNING FROM THE
JANATA. IN THEIR CURRENT TALKS WITH THEIR LOYALISTS,
BOTH PRESUMABLY REALIZE THAT SUCH AN EXIT WOULD ONLY
FURTHER ISOLATE THEM IN THE POLITICAL WILDERNESS.
ACCORDING TO CONVENTIONAL WISDOM HERE (WHICH WE SHARE),
CHARAN SINGH AND RAJ NARAIN WOULD BE ABLE TO CARRY A
MAXIMUM OF 25 TO 30 JANATA MPS WITH THEM, NOT ENOUGH
TO DESTABILIZE THE DESAI GOVERNMENT. SUCH A RUMP
FACTION OF CHARAN SINGH LOYALISTS APPEARS TO HAVE
NOWHERE TO GO. IT SEEMS INCONCEIVABLE THAT THEY
WOULD ALIGN WITH MRS. GANDHI'S CONGRESS(I). ON THE
OTHER HAND, TO LINK UP WITH CHAVAN'S OFFICIAL CONRESS
WOULD BE TANTAMOUNT TO JUMPING ABOARD A SINKING SHIP.

7. INEVITABLE, DELHI'S RUMOR MILLS ARE BUZZING OVER
POSSIBLE SUCCESSORS TO CHARAN SINGH AND RAJ NARAIN

IN THE HOME AND HEALTH PORTFOLIOS. FOR THE MOMENT,
THE PM MAY CHOOSE TO RETAIN THE HOME PORTFOLIO HIMSELF,
SINCE DURING CHARAN SINGH'S LONG CONFINEMENT HE HAD
BEEN DE FACTO IN CHARGE OF THE HOME MINISTRY
ANYWAY. IN THE LONGER TERM, POSSIBLE CANDIDATES FOR
THE JOB ARE RUMORED TO BE FOREIGN MINISTER
VAJPAYEE, DEFENSE MINISTER RAM OR EVEN JANATA PRESIDENT
CHANDRA SHEKHAR. ONE STRONG RUMOR CIRCULATING TODAY
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HAS IT THAT PILOO MODY MAY SUCCEED RAJ NARAIN AS
HEALTH MINISTER. THERE IS ALSO A GREAT DEAL OF
SPECULATION THAT MORARJI WILL SEIZE THE OPPORTUNITY
TO RESHUFFLE HIS CABINET VERY SOON AND WEED OUT SEVERAL
MINISTERS WHO HAVE PROVED TO BE INCAPABLE.

8. THE SITUATION IN HARAYANA, U.P. AND BIHAR, STATES
WITH BLD CHIEF MINISTERS OBTINENTLY LOYAL TO
CHARAN SINGH, IS STILL MURKY. IN HARYANA, CHIEF
MINISTER DEVI LAL CONTINUES TO CRITICIZE THE PRIME
MINISTER'S ACTION, AND DISSIDENTS AMONG THE JANATA MLA'S
(SIGNIFICANTLY INCLUDING SOME FORMER JANA SANGHIS)
HAVE RENEWED THEIR EFFORTS TO OUST HIM. ON THE OTHER
HAND, THE CHIEF MINISTERS OF U.P. AND BIHAR HAVE
BEEN MORE CAUTIOUS IN THEIR REACTIONS AND MAY BE LOATH
TO RESIGN FROM THEIR MINISTRIES MERELY AS A GESTURE
OF SOLIDARITY WITH CHARAN SINGH. AT THE SAME TIME,
THESE TWO CM'S ARE NOW PRESUMABLY IN MORE VULNERABLE
POSITIONS GIVEN THE REMOVAL FROM THE SCENE OF THEIR
PATRON AT THE CENTER. THEY MAY AGAIN BE FACED WITH
GROWING DISSIDENCE AMONG THEIR OWN MLA'S. HOWEVER,
WE HAVE HEARD FROM A SOURCE CLOSE TO THE PM THAT THE
CENTRAL JANATA LEADERSHIP INTENDS TO ALLOW THE U.P.
AND BIHAR CHIEF MINISTERS TO REMAIN IN OFFICE FOR THE
TIME BEING. PRESUMABLY, IF DISSIDENCE GROWS IN THESE
STATES, THE VITAL JANA SANGH ELEMENT AMONG THE MLA'S
WILL BE INSTRUCTED TO SIDE WITH THE FORCES OF STABILITY,
I.E., WITH THE CURRENT CHIEF MINISTERS. ADMITTEDLY,
ALL OF THIS IS SOMEWHAT CONJECTURAL IN WHAT IS A VERY
FLUID SITUATION.

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